



Cope's gray treefrog

Hyla chrysoscelis

Kingdom: Animalia
Division/Phylum: Chordata - vertebrates
Class: Amphibia
Order: Anura
Family: Hylidae

Features

The gray treefrog and Cope's gray treefrog make up the gray treefrog complex. The gray treefrog is Iowa's largest treefrog. Cope's and gray treefrogs typically are 1 1/4 to two inches long. Cope's gray treefrog and the gray treefrog are two separate species, but they appear identical externally. Their calls; however, are different. The call of the gray treefrog is a musical trill that has a bubbly quality that sounds as if the frogs are singing under water (similar to a red-bellied woodpecker). The call of Cope's gray treefrog is harsh and of a higher pitch with the vibrations of the trill closer together. The two species also have different numbers of chromosomes. The Cope's gray treefrog has a normal (diploid) number of chromosomes, while the gray treefrog has two full sets of chromosomes (tetraploid). The body is usually gray or green, but with many variations. A light spot is present beneath each eye. The concealed surfaces of the hind legs are bright orange mottled with black. The back is warty and has a star-shaped or irregular dark blotch. An adhesive pad is present on the tip of each toe. The tadpole's tail is marked with red and black.

Natural History

Cope's gray treefrog is a prairie/savanna-associated species. It may be found in trees or shrubs that are in or near water. In dry climates it may be found in dead trees, under bark, or in rotten logs. It eats arthropods (spiders, insects, mites, etc.). Breeding occurs from late April into July. Eggs are deposited in almost any water-filled depression. Packets of two to three dozen eggs are attached to the vegetation at the water's surface. A total of 1,800 eggs per female may be deposited. Hatching occurs in a few days. Larvae transform from May through August, about two months after hatching.

Habitats

natural lakes and prairie marshes; bottomland forests; constructed lakes, ponds, and reservoirs; Mississippi River; Missouri River; interior rivers and streams; temporary water supplies

Iowa Status

common, native

Iowa Range

statewide

Bibliography

Iowa Department of Natural Resources. 2001.
Biodiversity of Iowa: Aquatic Habitats CD-ROM.